

AMERICA'S BLESSINGS AND OBLIGATIONS. 7.

A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED IN

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH,

LANCASTER, Pa.,

BY THE

REV. F. W. CONRAD,

ON THE DAY OF

NATIONAL THANKSGIVING,

November 26, 1863.

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THE EXTRAORDINARY BLESSINGS CONFERRED, IMPOSE
UPON THE AMERICAN NATION, CORRESPONDING OB-
LIGATIONS.

TEXT : "*He has not dealt so with any nation : — Praise ye the
Lord.*" Ps. 147 : 20.

DEARLY BELOVED :

WE are assembled here to-day, in accordance with the proclamation of the President of the United States, which all of you have doubtless read. This proclamation acknowledges, that all our general and special blessings come from God, and that in consequence of their bestowment, the obligation is imposed upon us, to confess the same with devout thanksgivings. Under the light of Nature, the Heathen nations were taught the same truth, and under the promptings of Reason, they were led to acknowledge it, in the same way. Revelation declares it every where, and gives specific directions, relative to the manner, in which the duty of thanksgiving is to be performed. Guided by these lights, the Fathers of the Republic, set apart a day in each year of the War of Independence, for public thanksgiving to God, for all their blessings and all their successes. Their example, in this respect, has been followed by nearly all the States of the Union, from that day to this. And as during the present year, special favors have been vouchsafed, a special call is made upon us, for corresponding thanksgivings. Under this conviction, the President has issued his Proclamation, and all the Governors of the loyal States have responded to it, so that we meet this morning to unite our Thanksgivings with those of our fellow citizens, in all the loyal States of the American Union.

This then, is Thanksgiving Day. Its name indicates the duty, which we are called upon to perform. It is based upon the reception of divine favors. These must be properly pondered, in order that gratitude may be inspired, and thankfulness expressed. To aid you in doing so, will be the object of our discourse. We expect to accomplish our end, in some degree at least, by discussing the theme :

"THE EXTRAORDINARY BLESSINGS CONFERRED, INPOSE UPON THE AMERICAN NATION CORRESPONDING OBLIGATIONS."

This truth is contained in our text. It refers primarily to the Israelites. The blessings which God had conferred upon them, are enumerated in this Psalm, and the conclusion is drawn, that they were extraordinary, that is to say, that God had not bestowed blessings, equal in number and the same in degree, upon any other nation, and hence the obligation rested upon them, to manifest a degree of thankfulness, corresponding to their character and value. By an allowable accommodation, we apply the language of the Psalmist to America, fully assured, that there is no other country on the face of the earth, in which it is so strikingly verified. "He has not dealt so with any nation": — therefore "Praise ye the Lord." Let us then, in the first place, enumerate some of the extraordinary blessings, which God has conferred upon us as a nation.

I. *The first of these blessings we mention, is, the Age in which we live.* Whether we regard the present age as a century, beginning with the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred, and ending with the year one thousand nine hundred; or whether we regard it as the average period of human life, viz: thirty-three years, beginning in A. D. 1842, and ending in A. D. 1875, being the third age of our national existence, we regard it as a peculiar privilege to enjoy life now. We prefer, however, to speak of it, as the nineteenth century, for, by extending back the hand of the aged present, we bade farewell, through them, to the eighteenth century, and by reaching forward, that of the youth before us, we shall live to greet the twentieth century. This age, then, belongs to all present. It is emphatically ours.

In view of this, we are called upon not only to thank God for life, but especially for having given us life now. To his sovereign pleasure we owe it, that we were not born, and destined to live, in any of the comparative ages of barbarism; and that, although there have been other, and great ages before ours, to one of which the appellation of Golden has been given, that we are permitted to live in that one, which deserves to be characterized emphatically, as the age of the world's progress. The nineteenth century has been distinguished by progress, among almost all the nations of the earth, and in none more so, than in our own. The difficulty is not to find examples of progress, but the difficulty is to find any thing capable of it, which has not made progress in this age.

There has been great progress made, in increasing the means for

sustaining life, by the invention of various implements of husbandry, the application of the principles of agricultural chemistry, to the fertilizing of the soil as well as, by the increase of the means of promoting the enjoyments of life, by the increase of manufactories of various kinds, so that the humblest can enjoy the comforts, if not the luxuries of life.

The progress in the facilities of intercourse between places and nations, by making turnpikes, constructing rail roads, cutting canals, opening rivers, and navigating seas and oceans, has been rapid. — By the use of steam, the intercourse between distant points of the same country, as well as, of remote nations, is rendered easy and frequent; transportation has become cheap and safe; and commerce has been extended to every clime.

Great progress has been made also in ameliorating the condition of the unfortunate and vicious, by the improvement of prison discipline, the emancipation of bondmen, the abolition of the slave trade, the erection of alms houses for the poor, houses of refuge for the erring, hospitals for the sick, and asylums for the blind, deaf and dumb, the idiots and the insane.

The progress made in popular education is not less noteworthy. Not only in America, England, Germany, and other nations of Europe; but even in Russia, Greece, and Turkey, its elevating impulse has been felt. The same is true in regard to education in its higher forms, as the multiplication of Academies and High Schools, Colleges and Universities, abundantly attests. Directly bearing upon the same subject, we notice the increase in the extent, the elevation of the moral tone, and the perfect freedom of the press, which by the circulation of newspapers, and the publication of books, has become one of the mightiest engines for disseminating useful knowledge.

The progress made in the science of government, is equally surprising. When we became a nation, there were but nine constitutional governments in the world, besides our own republic. Now, of the sixty-seven States of Europe, all but two, Russia and Austria, have received constitutions, and many of them have demanded a still greater extension of popular rights. The foundations of the ancient dogmas of despotism, are being examined, and the divine right of kings to rule, denied. Nations have confronted the tyrants that oppressed them, have demanded and obtained a removal of grievances, and in some cases, where this was refused, they have torn down their thrones, and hurled their oppressors to the ground.

And last, though by no means least, we mention the progress made in the moral condition of the world, by increasing the agencies and instrumentalities, for extending the knowledge of Christ to the ends of the earth. The heathen world, almost locked against the missionaries of the cross, half a century ago, has now been thrown wide open by the Providence of God, and the heralds of Christ are safe and welcome, to proclaim salvation among all nations. In nominally Christian countries, where a few years ago, sectarian bigotry and religious intolerance, crushed the spirit of religious inquiry, the shackles which bound the mind, have been removed, an enlarged degree of religious freedom is enjoyed, the ignorant are asking for instruction, and those in darkness, are coming to the light. The Church is realizing more and more, her obligation to obey the last and greatest command of her Head, to preach the Gospel to every creature, and God is giving her continued assurances, that the promise shall be fulfilled, that the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of Christ, and that he shall reign over them forever and ever. Are we not, therefore, called upon to acknowledge, that God, in giving us life, in the age of the world's greatest progress, and in the land which has outstript, in this respect, all others, has not dealt so with the people of any other age or nation, and hence that the corresponding obligation rests upon us, to praise the Lord?

II. *The second extraordinary blessing, which God has conferred upon us as a nation, is, the Country which we inhabit.* When God desired to point out to Abraham, the extent of the country, he intended to bestow on his posterity, he commanded him to look to the North and the South, to the East and the West, and then added, "All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever." So too, did God, by his Providence, elevate Washington to the highest point of observation, bid him cast his eye over this vast territory, and then added, by crowning his efforts with success, All this land will I give thee, and thy posterity. To what people has he given such a country?

Look at its extent! From the St. John on the North, to the Gulf of Mexico on the South; from the Atlantic on the East, to the Pacific on the West; it embraces almost three millions of square miles, nearly equal to all Europe, and adequate to receive and sustain all the inhabitants of the globe.

Notice its fertility! It contains almost every variety of soil, necessary to the growth of the various products of the earth, and in the abundance of the yield, it is unsurpassed. This is not only true in

regard to the natural productiveness of the soil, but the means for increasing this, are scattered every where in such profusion, that it can not only never wear out, but it is capable of continued improvement.

Contemplate its mineral resources ! Beneath the rich soil lie imbedded, inexhaustible mines of lead, iron, coal, copper, silver and gold, as well as, jewels and gems, answering for all the purposes of husbandry, transportation, machinery, fuel, circulating medium, and ornament, and adequate to make us the workshop of the world.

Observe its mighty rivers, running like so many veins from the mountains, penetrating every valley, watering every plain, affording an easy channel of transportation, for the minerals of our mountains, the timber of our forests, the harvests of our lands, and the products of our industry. A multitude of silvery lakes are dotted over it, vast gulfs and bays are interspersed through it, and two mighty oceans lave and defend its eastern and western boundaries.

Notice also the variety and salubrity of its climate ! On the South, it enjoys the sunny clime of the Tropics, on the North, it is fanned by the cool breezes from the Arctic regions, and excluding both the torrid and frigid zones, it embraces nearly the whole of the temperate, with all the variety which hill and dale, mountain and plain, sea breeze and season produce.

Admire too its romantic scenery ! Its innumerable hills, and beautiful vales ; its majestic rivers and wide extending mountain chains ; its snow-crowned peaks and thundering waterfalls ; its grassy prairies and timbered forests ; its fearful precipices and charming landscapes ; its fragrant flowers and variegated shrubbery ; its murmuring rivulets and bubbling fountains ; its ornamental trees and golden fruits, and tell us, whether the eye of man has ever rested on a lovelier land ? Again we may exclaim, in view of the character of the country, which God has bestowed upon us, "He hath not dealt so, with any nation ;" therefore, Let us praise the Lord.

III. *The third extraordinary blessing, which God has conferred upon us as a nation, is the Government under which we dwell.* — The various forms of government, may be divided into four general classes, viz. the Despotic, Aristocratic, Constitutional Monarchical, and the Republican. In a despotism, the will of the monarch is law, unrestricted either by a nobility or a constitution ; in an aristocracy, the power of the government is lodged in the hands of a nobility ; in a constitutional monarchy, it is divided between the crown, the nobles, and the representatives of the people, according to the provisions of a constitution ; and in a republic, the people are re-

garded as the sources of power, which is exercised by representatives and executives, chosen by themselves for a limited time, and held directly responsible to them.

The direct tendency of all these forms of government, except the republican, is, to exalt the few and depress the many, to clothe the one in the splendors of royalty, the other in the rags of poverty, and morally to corrupt both. The nobles are inflated by wealth, intoxicated by ambition, debased by passion, and degraded by vice; and these corrupt the masses, who receive exaggerated notions of the importance of the upper classes, and in submitting to their authority, they copy their example. The people are oppressed by taxation, to pay their enormous national debts, and their exorbitant governmental expenditures, as well as, to sustain the pomp and extravagance of royalty, and the ponderous weight of church establishments. The lands are generally owned by the nobility, who extort the most onerous rents from their cultivators, which, together with the miserable stipend paid for labor, crushes them to the earth in pinching and hopeless poverty. The *Edinburg Review* says of England: "There are taxes upon every thing; upon every article that enters the mouth, or covers the back, or is placed under the feet; taxes upon every thing pleasant to see, hear, smell or taste; taxes upon warmth, light and locomotion; taxes upon every thing on earth, and the waters under the earth; taxes on every thing that comes from abroad, or that grows at home; taxes upon the raw material, and upon every fresh value, which is added to it by the industry of man; taxes upon the sauce that pampers a man's appetite, and upon the drug that restores him to health; on the ermine that decorates the judge, and the rope that hangs the criminal; on the poor man's salt and the rich man's spice; on the brass nails of the coffin, and the ribbands of the bride." And if this be so in England, which is the best constitutional monarchy in the world, how much worse is it in other countries? England owes more money than the aggregate currency of the world, is hopelessly bankrupt, and the same may be said of the most of the other nations of Europe. And although it be true, that we are now paying direct taxes, to meet the extraordinary expenses of the war, we must not forget, that this is an anomaly in our history, and that however great the war debt of the country may be at its close, the recuperative energies, and the inexhaustible resources of the nation, are such, that we shall not only not be crushed by it, but bear it with ease, for a season, and then cast it off at our pleasure and convenience.

In these nations the rights of the people are not respected, and the privilege of choosing their own rulers is withheld. Station and power are hereditarily transmitted, and men are born kings and princes. Some are made nobles by the special favor of the crown, while the privilege of electing even the Commons, is enjoyed only by the wealthy and more favored class. In these governments, individual progress is almost impossible. The wants of the people are not regarded, their groans are not heeded, and their evils are not redressed. The cry of the aristocracy, Give ! Give ! is always louder, than the wail of the downtrodden, Spare ! Spare us ! They have no voice in measuring their own burdens, and hence can exert no influence upon those who are interested in continuing their oppressions, for, by that craft they have their wealth.

When we look at these political evils, and hundreds of others to which we cannot now refer, is it not delightful to realize, how differently we are situated, how superior our system of government is, and how great the rights and prerogatives which we enjoy ? In exulting over our form of government, and declaring it to be the best on earth, we do not affirm it to be perfect, and incapable of improvement, but in comparison with the political privileges conferred by the government of any other nation, how vastly superior are those conferred by ours.

In our country, and especially in the North, we have no favored class, who are born to hold the offices, but every honest citizen may share them. Here we have no titled gentry, to crush us to the earth, to eat out our substance, and render wretched our existence ; but our rulers are selected from among ourselves, they are as much interested in promoting our welfare as we are, and whenever they prove unfaithful, and sacrifice the public good to their own interests, we can hurl them from their stations, and elect others in their places.

Under our government we have no officers, who receive an exorbitant emolument, but a just reward is bestowed for rendering valuable services, and the voice of the people is heard, in apportioning the amount of their salaries. In the Free States the right of suffrage is not the privilege of the favored few, but every American and naturalized citizen, who has not forfeited the same by high crimes, is entitled to its exercise. Here we can open our mouths wide, and in a legitimate manner express our disapprobation of the administration of our government, and expose the treachery of any of our rulers, while the exercise of this right in some countries, even

in ordinary times, would be followed by imprisonment and death. A noble boy was shot in Hungary, for saying: "Long live Kossuth!" Here we can send our petitions to those in authority, for redress when wronged, with the assurance that they will be respected, and our prayers to God, knowing that with them none dare interfere, while under most other governments, the right of petition is not allowed, and women and children were hung in Hungary for praying: "Lord, save our country!" Here protection is afforded to all who flee from tyranny and oppression, while in Turkey, even after it was promised, it could only be granted to Kossuth and his compatriots, on condition of renouncing their religion, and denying their Savior and God. Here liberty in its widest extent is enjoyed; while to strike for it in Poland, brought the lion, tiger, and bear — Russia, Austria, and Prussia — furiously upon her, who tore her to pieces, and glutted themselves on her flesh. To strike for liberty in Hungary, and maintain that stroke against the imbecile House of Habsburg, brought down upon its champions, the barbarous hordes of the Neroic despot Nicholas, who, uniting his armies with those of Austria, carried death, devastation, and destruction, by fire and sword, through that ill-fated land. To strike for liberty in Italy, still of glorious memory, but for ages down-trodden—pope-crushed—and priest-ridden Italy, brought France, the first to strike for liberty herself, to Rome, and pretending only, Judas-like, to give her sister a friendly greeting with a kiss, drew a dagger, stabbed her to the heart, and flung her mutilated carcass to the ground. But while the government of the United States endures, the fires of republicanism can never be extinguished in Europe. The free breezes from America, wafted across the Atlantic, have reached the embers of the funeral pile of Italian Liberty, the sparks of which have burst forth again, and fanned by the hand of Garibaldi, have overrun and burnt out the stubble and brush wood of Despotism, so that Italy has been liberated, and become almost united, under a constitutional monarchy, presided over by Victor Emmanuel. Poland, under the quickening power of American institutions, has felt again the throbbings of national life, and rousing herself from the stupor of oppression, is now striking gigantic blows for constitutional freedom, which may God in his goodness crown with success. And Hungary, will e'er long hear the trumpet sound of American Liberty, rise from the grave of tyranny, and enjoy a resurrection of national life. Who, in view of such oppressions, and either fruitless or only partially successful attempts for deliverance, does not thank God that he can

say, I am an American citizen? And who will refuse to acknowledge the truth of the declaration of the text, that God, in granting us our system of republican government, has not dealt so with any nation; and that the obligation rests upon us, to praise the Lord?

IV. *The fourth extraordinary blessing which God has conferred upon us as a nation, is embraced in the Gifts of his Providence.* When God intended to convey to Abraham the idea of the increase of his posterity, he bade him number the stars of heaven, and then added, "so shall thy seed be." In like manner, did he deal with our Fathers, and by his providential teachings said to them, If ye can number the stars, then shall ye be able to estimate the increase of your posterity. Where in the history of the world, is there an example of national increase, which can be compared with ours?—From three millions, our numbers have been multiplied, by natural generation and immigration, until we now number over thirty-four millions; twice as many as Ireland and England combined, and almost as many as France; and from thirteen States, we have increased to thirty-four, in a little more than three-fourths of a century.

Our advancement in public improvements, is likewise unparalleled. Villages and towns have sprung up as if by magic; cities have been multiplied, extended their borders, and greatly increased their trade; canals and railroads, like net work, have been projected with astonishing rapidity over much of our country; prairies have been converted into gardens, forests have been changed into farms, and the haunts of the buffaloe, and the hunting grounds of the Indian, have become the habitations of civilized men. The rattling of our mills, the noise of our manufactories, the blow-horn of our boatmen, the splashing of the oars of our raftsmen, the rumbling of our wagons, the tread of our business men, the whistling of our ploughmen, the puffing of our steamboats, the flapping of our sails, the ticking of our telegraphs, and the snorting of our iron horses, never cease. Our beautiful cottages and neat farm-houses, our comfortable dwellings and numerous school houses, our commodious academies and large colleges, our magnificent mansions and massive public buildings, our seminaries and temples of God, impart comfort, extend instruction, and carry the blessings of religion, to the threshold of almost every American.

And in addition to these general blessings, granted us in the past, we must not overlook specific ones, bestowed upon us in the present. The fruits of the earth have been conferred upon us in great abun-

dance, during the year just closing, verifying the Divine promise, that while the earth remaineth, "seed time and harvest shall not cease." Famine has not been permitted to waste us, nor have failures been allowed even to stint us. And while this would be matter of thanksgiving at any time, it becomes so especially at this time. To realize this, let us endeavor to picture, what the condition of our country would be, if God, instead of bestowing upon us plenty during this, and the other years of the raging of civil strife, had cursed us with scarcity. Want would have stared us in the face every where, suffering would have become general and intense, and the clamor for peace on any terms, might have jeopardized the life and the unity of the nation.

Health too has been granted us. The years of the war, have been remarkably free from epidemics. The pestilence that walketh at noon-day has not visited us, and the destruction that wasteth at midnight, has not come nigh us. And when we recollect, how common these are at the South, how frequently they have visited the North, how much the traitors and rebels counted on their aid in thinning the ranks of the Union armies in the tropic, and how completely Providence has disappointed them, and favored us, we cannot but confess, that the hand of the Lord hath done it, and deserves our profoundest gratitude.

We have been saved also, from the devastating tread of war. When we read the accounts of the agitations and convulsions, the cruelties and barbarities, the want and suffering, the destruction of property and the loss of life, on the field of conflict in the South, we have reason for special gratitude, that the seat of war has been almost entirely removed from our borders.

We have thus far escaped also from foreign entanglements. When we contemplate the jealousy of the monarchical governments of Europe, the hatred of their aristocracies to republican institutions, and the insidious efforts and secret intrigues of rebel emissaries, we cannot too highly prize that interposition of Providence, which has prevented the acknowledgement of the Confederacy as a nation, and preserved us from the necessity of waging a foreign, as well as, a domestic war, for national existence and unity.

Nor must we forget the successes, which have crowned the efforts of our armies. This, deserves to be characterized especially as, the year of the right hand of the Lord. Our victories have been numerous and great. They have hardly been interspersed with a defeat. They may be counted by tens, but we can only mention

those of Stone River, Vicksburg, Port Hudson, Gettysburg, and Chattanooga. The territory of the rebellious states has been cut in two, and its limits have been greatly circumscribed. The armies of Treason have been beaten, routed, scattered, and thinned, while those of the Union and the Government, have increased in their strength, and proven almost invincible on both land and sea. All military signs indicate the speedy overthrow of the rebellion, and the appearance of the bow of promise in our political heavens, promises to become the harbinger of a speedy and permanent peace. And for all this, we owe special thanksgivings to the God of Battles.

And last, though by no means least, we mention the manifestation of the hand of a superintending Providence, in the determination of the course of our political affairs. It has given us an honest, patriotic, and incorruptable President. It has guided him in the adoption and prosecution of a war policy, founded on the Right. It has rebuked political faction, and thwarted partizan demagogues. It has turned the hearts of the people to the government, and united them in its unflinching support. It has given the nation a new baptism of Freedom, and prepared it for making any possible sacrifice for its maintenance. It has given the death blow to Slavery, the cause of all our troubles, the curse of our land, and the disgrace of the age. And it will lead us through this fiery ordeal, and bring us out of it, purified from political inconsistency and corruption, and enable us to go forth as the standard bearer of Liberty, among the nations of the earth. In view then, of these multiplied providential blessings, we can still exclaim : "He hath not dealt so with any nation," therefore, let us praise the Lord.

V. *The last extraordinary blessing, God has conferred upon us as a nation, is found in the religious privileges we enjoy.* At these we can take but a glance. Our country has no religious establishment, but it nevertheless has a religion. Our government is based upon religion, and in its statutes, oaths, and sanctions, acknowledges it. That religion is Christianity, which in its general form, is part of the common law of the land. We grant to all the right to worship God, according to the dictates of their consciences, and permit none to molest them in its exercise, or to make them afraid. We extend to all full toleration, liberty of conscience, and the right of private judgment, and while we do not deprive any from the enjoyment of the prerogatives of citizenship, on account of differences of religious views, we permit none to persecute for opinion's sake.

The Church, disconnected from the State, is free. The voluntary principle of sustaining pastors and building churches has been successfully illustrated. Protected, but not controlled by the secular arm, the American Church has exhibited spiritual energies, and developed religious resources, scarcely equalled in the ecclesiastical history of the world. And while unrestricted religious freedom, has, by its abuse, produced a large number of sects in our country, Providence has to a great extent overruled their existence for good. For, while they have given occasion to bigotry and sectarianism on the one hand, they have also become the means of provoking one another to love and good works, on the other, and they have furnished constant opportunity, for the exhibition of the spirit of the true Catholicity of Christianity. And while our ministry has rapidly increased, our houses of worship have been multiplied, and our church membership augmented, under the ordinary use of the means of grace, a mighty impulse has been given to every aspect of Church efficiency, by the scriptural use of special efforts, for the conversion of sinners, and the edification of saints, owned by Him who giveth the increase, with special outpourings of the Holy Spirit. And although the Church of Christ, in America may be distinguished by peculiar characteristics, there is none which stands out more prominently, than her numerous, extensive, spiritual, and scriptural Revivals of Religion. We readily confess, that much extravagance and some fanaticism, have been mixed with our religious progress, but notwithstanding all this, its substantial genuineness is proven, by its practical development and good fruits.

Accordingly, we have established various benevolent associations, which cover almost all the moral wants of our country, and much of those of other portions of the earth. Our Bible Societies furnish the word of life, not only to every family in our own land, but they translate it into every tongue, and are endeavoring to supply it to all nations. Our Tract Societies scatter the seed of divine truth broad-cast over the earth. Our Home Missionary Societies break the bread of life to the destitute at home, and our Foreign ones, to the benighted abroad. Our Education societies aid our poor pious young men in preparing for the work of the Lord, and send help to our feeble literary and theological institutions at the West. Our American and Foreign Christian Union, meets the Romanist at home and abroad with an open Bible, and labors to convince him, that the doctrines of Protestantism, accord with its infallible instructions.—Our society for the amelioration of the condition of the Jews, ex-

tends to the once favored son of Abraham, the hand of love, and offers to convince him, from his own Scriptures, that Jesus of Nazareth was the Shiloh, the Root of Jesse, the Stem of David — yea, that he is the Messiah of Israel. Our Seaman's Friend Society watches about the wharf, steps on board the ship, gives the hand of friendship to the noble Tar, invites him to the Bethel Flag when in port, and instructs him how to steer his barque, in order to make the haven of Paradise, and cast his anchor both sure and steadfast in the port of Heaven. Our Sunday School Union endeavors to gather our children into Sabbath Schools, in order to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. And as these different benevolent societies have been called forth, from time to time, by the existence of some great and peculiar want, so too, has the civil war, still raging in our country, brought with it new and pressing wants, to meet which, new associations have been called into existence. The soldiers, sick, wounded, and in prison, in thousands upon thousands, call for help, and our Christian and Sanatary Commissions, together with a multitude of Soldier's Aid Societies, are organized and go forth to extend it. The Freedmen, whose chains, touched by the Proclamation of Emancipation, have fallen off, poor, ignorant, and homeless wanderers — men, women and children by tens of thousands, are crying for bread, clothing, protection, and instruction, and our Freedmen's Association has been formed, to aid the government, in relieving and elevating these wronged, robbed, and brutalized creatures of God, under the oppressive yoke of ages of bondage. And besides all this, our Ministry are laboring every where to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the living God, that they may obtain remission of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified, through faith in Jesus Christ. And upon all the seed thus sown, God is shedding the dews of spiritual grace, dropping down the showers of heavenly rain, and pouring forth the genial rays of the Sun of Righteousness, thus producing a rich and an abundant religious harvest.

Who that contemplates, in contrast with the state of religion in our country, that of those countries, where the unnatural alliance exists between Church and State, and sees the formality and hypocrisy, the intolerance and heresy, which have resulted from State Church Establishments, is not ready to thank God for a free religion, a free Bible, a free sanctuary, a free ministry, a free conscience, a free worship, free speech, and free opinion, in all of which he is subject to dictation and control from none, and is only called upon

to acknowledge Jesus Christ, as Lord and Master. In view of our great religious advantages then, we are enabled once more to exclaim, "He hath not dealt so with any nation!" therefore, let us praise the Lord.

II. *We proceed, in the second place, to show, that the extraordinary blessings conferred, impose upon us corresponding obligations.* This follows from the declaration of Jesus, that, "to whom much is given, from him will much be required." And as God has not dealt so bountifully with any other nation, in the bestowment of his gifts, neither will he require from any other people, what he will require from us.

To meet our obligations, we must believe and acknowledge, that all our blessings come from God. We must fully realize, that the things wherein, and the degree in which, we differ from others, are to be attributed not to chance, not to the iron working of necessity, not to the uniform working of the forces of nature, not to natural instruments and human agencies, but to the special and constant interposition of God, in the arrangements of his Providence, and the bestowment of his grace. Yes, we must understand that "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof"; that every good and perfect gift is from above; and that the Most High ruleth over the kingdoms of the earth, and disposes of them, according to his own pleasure. Without such a faith in Jehovah, as the God of nations, and such an acknowledgement of our indebtedness to him, for all our national blessings, it will be impossible to exercise the feelings of gratitude, or to express them by public thanksgivings.

To meet our obligations, we must acknowledge the will of God, as expressed in his Word, to be the ultimate rule, to which national practice must be conformed, and by which its righteousness must be determined. That the Word of God is the ultimate rule of right to the individual, is acknowledged by all who believe in his existence and perfections, and that the same is true of nations, is just as capable of proof, from reason, scripture, providence and history. There is not one code of moral law enacted for the individual and another for the State. The individual is not governed by a perfect and strict rule of right, and the government by a defective and lax one. The same command which is addressed to the individual, enjoining justice and truth, and forbidding theft and murder, man-stealing and slavery, is addressed to nations as bodies politic, with the same propriety, is enforced by the same authority, and rendered obligatory for the same reasons. Just in proportion then, as a nation has con-

formed its constitution and laws, to the eternal principles of right, contained in the Word of God, and regulated its practice accordingly, will be its character in the sight of God, and by this just estimate, he will be governed in his dealings with them. This is all involved in the declaration of an inspired writer, that "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach unto any people." Without an acknowledgement of this great truth, both in theory and practice, national thanksgiving will be mockery and insult, and constitute an abomination in the sight of God. Deny that the will of God is the ultimate rule of right for nations, and you have dethroned the King of Kings; for, a throne without authority, is only an elevated platform, and authority, without the right to enact law, and enforce it by sanctions, is a contradiction in terms. To come before God with thanksgivings, while denying him the absolute rights of sovereignty, finds its parallel in the conduct of the Jews, who put a purple robe on their Messiah, a crown of thorns upon his head, a reed in his hand, and then bowing the knee to him, greeted him in mockery with, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

To meet our obligations, we must improve the blessings which God has conferred upon us. They constitute so many talents entrusted to us as national stewards. We are bound to preserve and use them, for the advancement of civilization, the amelioration of the condition of mankind, and the glory of God. By neglecting to do this, we shall bury our ten national talents, forget our obligations to humanity, and expose ourselves to the doom of the nations that forget God.

Let us then, as we have been permitted to belong to this age of progress, not be satisfied with the advances already made, but as we have received its interests, at the hands of the depositors of the former age, let us improve it to the utmost of our ability, and hand it down, not rusted but burnished, to them who shall live to receive it, as a similar trust from us, in the twentieth century.

Let us defend the unity of our whole country, at all hazards and at every sacrifice, and continue to improve it still more, so that when we pass away from it, and bestow it as an inheritance to others, that it may still be "the land of the free and the home of the brave", the Canaan of God's Israel, and the Asylum of the oppressed from every land. Let us not hail our government as perfect and incapable of improvement, but guided by reason and experience, and studying the history of nations, and the principles of God's word, let us

amend what is defective, annul what is wrong, and so add what may be needed, that all our constitutions and statutes may accord with the true end of government, and secure to all its citizens, their inalienable rights. Let us not baptize political errors with immortality, because they are hoary with age, but denounce and expose them, however hallowed they may seem, in the eyes of their votaries. Let us choose for our rulers, just men who shall rule us in the fear of God, whom we can respect, not only for their office', but for their worth's sake, for whom we can sincerely pray, to whom we can righteously submit, not for wrath but for conscience sake, for whom we may expect Divine guidance, and upon whom there may rest the constant favor of God. Let us look for them in their modest retirement, and honor them with our confidence and support, rather than accept the brazen offers of unprincipled demagogues, knowing that the word of God is verified in experience when it declares, that "as a roaring lion and a raging bear, so is a wicked ruler over the poor people," but "when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice."

Let us realize the greatness of our providential blessings, and use them in the promotion of the ends for which they were given. Our numbers—let them be enrolled and constitute the host of the Lord: our public improvements — let them be used to advance the chariot of salvation: our harvests — let them be a waive offering to the bountiful giver: peace, when it shall come again — let its hallowed quiet be employed in doing the work of him that restored it: health — let its energies be devoted to the service of him, who is the framer of the body and the preserver of its strength: our religious privileges — let them be so improved, that every thing which pertains to our country may be sanctified to God: our Government — that it may be an ordinance of God: our Rulers — that they may bear the sword of God: our Constitution — that it may contain the principles of the government of God: our Union — that it may be perpetuated as the gift of God: our Laws — that they may be conformed to the righteousness of God: our Army and Navy — that they may be to us the shield of God: our People — that they may prove themselves to be the people of God: our Schools — that they may be the nurseries of God: our Institutions — that they secure the rights of God: our Temples — that they may preserve the religion of God: our Treasures — that they may be devoted to the glory of God: and our whole Country — that it may be and remain the Canaan of God.

By so doing, we shall be able in the highest degree, to enjoy our extraordinary privileges, and be capacitated for, and worthy of, the reception of still greater ones ; which we may hope will be conferred upon us, according to the declaration of Christ, that “to him that hath shall be given and he shall have more abundance.” But if we fail thus to manifest our gratitude, and suitably to express our thankfulness, we shall fall under the severe displeasure of God. We shall turn our very blessings into curses, according to the command of Christ, to take the talent from the slothful servant ; for, “from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath.”

Let us not forget, that in proportion to our elevation, will be our exposure to danger. We are constantly tempted to glory in the wisdom of our wise men, the wealth of our rich men, and the strength of our mighty men, instead of the Lord. Our long continued prosperity has enticed us to self-indulgence, covetousness, ambition and oppression on the one hand, and to the denial of our dependence upon God and to disobedience to him on the other.

Let us humbly confess, that as our blessings have been great, and as our obligations have corresponded to them, so too has our sin of misimproving these blessings, and of failing to meet these obligations, been great likewise. — I know full well, that we are called a Christian nation, and that in theory at least we acknowledge Jehovah to be the God of America, and the dispenser of all her blessings, but in practice we have often dethroned the Lord, and attributed our prosperity and adversity, to natural causes, or to the wisdom and folly of men, rather than to the favor or displeasure of God. We acknowledge theoretically that the will of God is the rule of national conduct, but practically we constantly deny it. Do we not test the morality of our national practices by our constitutions and statutes, rather than test our constitutions and statutes by the law of God ? Are there not multitudes among us, who mould their opinions of right by the articles of party platforms, rather than test party platforms, by the principles of right contained in God's word ? And are there not principles incorporated into many of our constitutions and statutes, which are contrary to right reason, abhorrent to every feeling of humanity, and condemned by every precept of the law of God ? To these interrogatories but one answer can be given, and that is that we have thus grievously sinned against the Lord our God, and exposed ourselves to his just reproach : “Hear, O

heavens ! and give ear, O earth ! for I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me."

And finally, let us fully realize, that our peculiar advantages mis-improved, expose us to peculiar judgments, and may involve us sooner or later in national ruin. God had not dealt with any nation as he had with Israel, and what nation did he ever curse with such judgments, and what nation did he ever destroy with such an overthrow. He said to them "The pride of thine heart has deceived thee ; thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is on high, that saith in thine heart, who shall bring me down to the ground ? Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord." Could Mark Anthony say to the Romans when Cæsar fell, O what a fall was there, my countrymen ! Then you, and I, and all of us fell down, whilst bloody treason triumphed o'er us. Could Jesus say to the towering city, And thou Capernaum ! which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell" and when the heavenly hosts witnessed it, could they exclaim, O what a fall was that ! Could the Roman poet say : "While stands the Coliseum, Rome shall stand : when falls the Coliseum, Rome shall fall : and when Rome falls — falls the world." But if America falls, to what shall it be likened ! America — the recipient of such blessings ! America — the depository of such a trust ! America — the heir of such an inheritance ! America — the guardian of such interests ! America the cradle of religious freedom ! America — the standard-bearer of civil liberty ! America — the plague of despotism ! America — the terror of tyrants ! America — the bow of promise to the oppressed ! America — the Sun of political truth ! America — the arch-angel of nations ! To what, I ask, shall her fall be likened ? but to that of Lucifer, the Son of the Morning, from the towering heights of heaven, down to the unfathomable depths of hell ; and as he fell not alone, but corrupted and involved in his fall, millions of other angelic beings, so too will America not fall alone, but influence and involve in her ruin the nations of the earth, and the fall of America will be the fall of the World.